

socialist standard

March 2014
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Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

Remembering the Great *class* War



30 years since the Miners' Strike



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Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make

new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join The Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we

will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

If you would like more details about The Socialist Party, complete and return the form on page 23.



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MARCH 2014

Editorial

Double standards

THIRTY YEARS ago this month began the Miners' Strike which ended in defeat. But the class struggle continues. On both sides. The recent strike by workers on London Underground led to calls by capitalist politicians for fresh attacks on the organised working class movement. They want new restrictions on strike action, proposals for a minimum service to be provided by London Underground workers like the current legislation around the fire service, new thresholds to make sure a majority of union members vote for strikes rather than just a majority of those who cast their ballots.

A Tory source said 'It's right that we look at issues like ballot thresholds and minimum service agreements in order to protect passengers on vital public transport networks.' Boris Johnson told BBC Radio 4's Today programme he supported new voting thresholds on industrial action ballots: 'I think minimum thresholds would be reasonable for vital public transport functions such as the London Underground which has to keep the greatest city on earth moving, on which millions of people depend on for their livelihoods, and people say: 'Oh, well, you only got elected on 40 percent and so on', well I quite understand that point. I just think that there's a difference between a local election or a political election and the operation of a vital public service.'

The Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers Union (RMT) and the Transport Salaried Staffs Association (TSSA) had walked out for 48 hours from 9.30 GMT on 4 February in a row over 953 job losses stemming from the closure of ticket offices.

The RMT ballot had a 76 percent yes vote on a 40 percent turnout while the TSSA ballot had a 59 percent yes vote on a 52 percent turnout.

Turnout statistics are very illuminating and demonstrate that 'our political leaders' shouldn't have any political power going by the yardstick they want to introduce. The 2012 London Mayoral election turnout was 38 percent of which Johnson got 44 percent of votes in the first round which is 17 percent of all London's electorate. Since 1979 the Euroelections have had an average 33 percent turnout with an all-time low in 1999 of 24 percent. A real all-time low is the 2012 turnout of 15 percent for Police and Crime Commissioners while a parliamentary by-election in Manchester South in 2012 had an 18 percent turnout. All these capitalist elections are null and void if we apply some turnout threshold on trade union ballots or are the organised working class a special case and in need of legislative sanctions?

Trade Unions are essentially defensive organisations of the working class to protect wages and working conditions, and the strike weapon is a necessary tool to prevent the working class being driven into the ground by the capitalist class's never-satisfied demands for profit - what Marx called 'the never-ceasing encroachments of capital'. As socialists we stand with our fellow working class in their necessary battles to defend themselves, but point out at all times that the real victory to be achieved is the abolition of the wages system.

Under the ground and over the moon

ONE WAY for the capitalist class to prevent any future repetition of miners' strikes, in any country, is the thrilling idea of not digging coal out of the ground but setting fire to it in situ and sucking the choking but exploitable gasses out through frack-style L-shaped tubes (*New Scientist*, 15 February). Anti-frackers will probably be aghast at the idea of lighting the fires of hell under our collective feet, and there are all sorts of predictable questions about 1100 degrees of heat fracturing erstwhile impermeable layers and subsequent leaching of benzene and toluene into water boreholes, as happened at one UGC site in Queensland, Australia. But it's worse than that. While fracking does at least offer one built-in environmental brownie-point in having only around 50 percent of coal's carbon footprint, underground coal gasification (UCG) offers no such saving, and instead relies on the pious promise by extractive industries to invest in money-losing carbon capture and storage schemes (CCS). Enthusiastic capitalists on fire to cash in on a process offering a potential 1000 years of global energy say the giant subterranean ashtrays created by UGC are the perfect spot to stuff all that unwanted CO₂, while the fabulous profits will easily pay for the required CCS pumping hardware. Conversely it won't only be socialists who, understanding why industrial pollution exists in the first place, will easily foresee that the mining will happen because there's money in it, but the CCS won't because there isn't. Humanity may have set its sights on a zero-carbon energy future, but as ever when capitalism gets a whiff of the filthy lucre, industry dashes off in the opposite direction.

With renewable energy as always in a sinkhole of unprofitability, what is the current state of play in nuclear fusion, that ultra-powerful and ultra-clean energy source that stubbornly refuses to exist in reality? Well, some good news there, as the National Ignition Facility in California has just announced a breakthrough with the first ever 'fuel gain' test, where 10 kilojoules of energy were put in and 15 kilojoules came out. But hold the champagne, because to run this test in the first place required an overall expenditure of 2 megajoules, meaning that overall net fuel gain is still orders of magnitude away. Part of the problem is the fact that fusion technology is currently based on heavy hydrogen. Hydrogen has just one charged proton, but its isotope deuterium carries an extra uncharged neutron, while tritium lugs about an extra two like an overloaded tourist. Fuse the tourists together at sun temperatures and a barrage of uncontrollable neutron baggage fires off in all directions, destroying and irradiating everything in its path including the reactor walls. This means that a) fusion is not clean at all but creates highly radioactive building waste and b) most of this neutron heat hurricane is wasted in the conversion of water to steam to drive a turbine, just like a fission reactor.

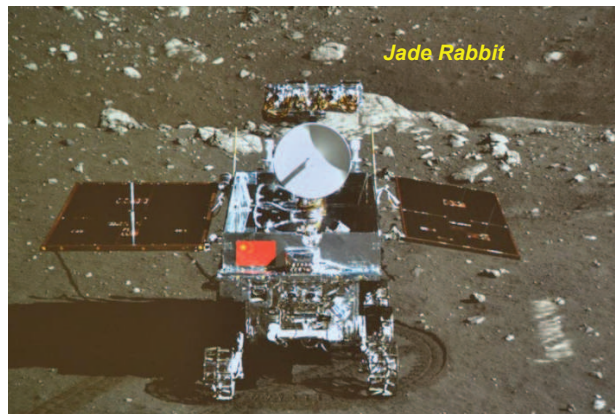
For a long time fusion freaks have been talking about using a light isotope of helium instead. Helium-3 or ³He is heavy on spare protons rather than neutrons, so protons get fired off instead. Because protons carry a positive charge you can channel and direct them with magnets, like a flock of excitable sheep, but they also convert directly to electricity without the need to boil water for a turbine. The result is that a) they don't burn your house down and b) they give an enormous increase in efficiency.

And the point of all this? The point is that there is hardly any

³He on Earth because being lighter than air it tends to float off into space, but there's tons of it on the Moon, where there isn't any air so it isn't lighter than anything and therefore stays put. Like UGC, the estimated potential for global energy usage for lunar ³He is around 1000 years. Which is precisely why China has got a Jade Rabbit up there. It plans to strip mine the Moon.

On the face of it not much has changed since the last time the *Standard* covered the Great Moon Rush (see *Material World*, December 2008). China may have set, if not foot, then robotic wheel on the surface, but this feat is dismissed by carping critics who point out that this only places China 50 years behind the US and the Russians, and that the Chinese tech is all old Russian knock-off anyway. Still less impressive that after two weeks in the freezing lunar dark the poor Rabbit emerged into the solar glare to stand transfixed with barely a pulse flickering.

But there is a key difference today, because water-ice has



been found at the poles, buried in deep and permanently dark craters. A human requires around 2 litres of water a day, and with the cost of lifting water from Earth at around \$25,000 a litre, even with intensive recycling of every last sweat globule a manned moon-base looked out of the question. Not anymore. With that discovery, strip-mining of the Earth's 'seventh continent' is finally becoming feasible. Being pragmatic about such things as all capitalists are, China wouldn't pay too much

for labour, but would send Tibetans, or convicts, so don't be surprised if future miners' strikes take place on the Moon.

Still, it's early days. The Moon Rush is at present more of a stroll. Budget-strapped NASA is in cahoots with private firms to get back in on the act, but private capitalists have to date shown less than cosmic achievement. The \$20m Google Lunar XPrize for the first privately-funded rover on the Moon, which blasted off in 2007 with much media fanfare, has so far not paid out so much as a bus fare, even though the deadline has been repeatedly extended. There is some debate about revising the terms of the various Space Treaties, according to which common ownership somehow exists in space, in order to allow private ownership to intrude into this absurd and uncaptalist anomaly. But the debate is civilised at the moment because nobody is in a position to stake much of a claim, and besides everyone knows that these treaties are mostly unsigned anyway and worth about as much as the Kyoto Agreement. The main legacy of Jade Rabbit thus far has been, rather like with the US Apollo missions and the Soviets, that China is winning its regional pissing contest with Japan. But the Japanese aren't taking this lying down, and plan with an appropriate sense of *bushido* to have their own rover on the Moon by 2017.

It's a curious fact that the glassy regolith dust on the Moon's surface smells like gunpowder, and there may come a time when Earth goes to war over this rock, perhaps for the platinum group metals expected in concentrations in the dark 'sea' areas you can easily see with the naked eye. An even more distant possibility is that mining won't stop at the Moon, but that it becomes a fuelling station on the way to the other planets and the moons of the gas giants.

One thing is beyond reasonable doubt. Were it not for the fact that the stars are permanently out of reach by any conceivable technology, the capitalists' eyes would be fixed greedily on the entire cosmos. For many people, forced to the realisation that there is literally nothing in heaven or earth that capitalism would not rob and rape and destroy, a space-age future without socialist sharing and collective resource management will be a prospect as chilling as the lunar night.

'Immigrants': a voice from the past

THINK-TANKS galore are releasing studies about income inequality. The Tories preach free markets as the answer to it while conveniently ignoring the failure of 'trickle down' economics. The Labour Party suggests the need for more social programmes while its left-wing argues for a greater redistribution of income in order to level the playing field. Of course, they will ignore the fact that decades of state-sponsored interventions have failed. What happens when inequality rises? Usually, a demagogue turns up to stir up the discontent and he or she will point the finger at 'them' for making things worse for 'us'. It is all too easy to blame outsiders for causing problems such as unemployment, the housing crisis or even crime.

The employers pay as much as they have to pay, in order to carry out their profit-making enterprises. The employers pay scant attention to the cost of living, much less its quality. They pay for their workers what they have to on the open market. They do not care whether you are of 100 percent Anglo-Saxon stock, related to the best families in the land or just another 'damned foreigner.' The workers found this out long ago and began to organise unions, pledging one another not to work below a

certain price. If they worked to get all available workers into the union and if they vigorously practised solidarity, they were better able to shift more of the burden of economic necessity from their own shoulders to the employer's, and make him pay them a 'living' wage.



Jewish immigrants in New York

'A Voice From The Aliens' ([www.noii.org.uk/files/A_Voice_From_The_Aliens_\(reprint_of_1895_pamphlet\).pdf](http://www.noii.org.uk/files/A_Voice_From_The_Aliens_(reprint_of_1895_pamphlet).pdf)) may possibly be one of the earliest appeals against blaming 'immigrants'. It was produced in 1895 and was published in the name of several Jewish trade unions. Jewish refugees started to come to this country in the 1880s, fleeing from persecution and pogroms in Eastern Europe and Tsarist Russia. At this time there were no immigration controls. However, there was very quickly racist agitation for such controls and unfortunately some in the trade union movement took up the demand for restrictions.

Those who today argue for a 'just' immigration policy ought to realise that over a century ago some trade unionists were fighting controls in principle. They rejected the notion of 'fair' controls and instead appealed for workers' solidarity against a system that exploits all workers.

It is, and always has been, the policy of the ruling classes to attribute the sufferings and miseries of the masses (which are natural consequences of class rule and class exploitation) to all sorts of causes except the real ones. The cry against the foreigner is not merely peculiar to England; it is international. Everywhere he is the scapegoat for other's sins. Every class finds in him an enemy. So long as the Anti-Alien sentiment in this country was confined to politicians, wire-pullers, and to individual working men, we, the organised aliens, took no heed; but when this ill-founded sentiment has been officially expressed by the organised working men of England, then we believe that it is time to lift our voices and argue the matter out...'

The pamphlet counters with the conclusion:

'...is [it] not rather the capitalist class (which is constantly engaged in taking trade abroad, in opening factories in China, Japan, and other countries) who is the enemy, and whether it is not rather their duty to combine against the common enemy than fight against us whose interests are identical with theirs...'

Precisely.

ALJO

* A reprint is available from No One Is Illegal website

Letters

Dear Editors,

Well done for attacking awful programmes like 'Benefits Street' (*Socialist Standard*, February).

Apart from profit, the aim of such programmes is clear: it's to turn working-class people against each other, and try to discredit the welfare state. If you can get ordinary people to resent other workers, then the propaganda has worked.

The system we live under gets let off the hook, thanks to sections of the media. And some tabloid newspapers are even worse in misrepresenting the working-class. Compare this to the totally uncritical coverage of the Royal Family in the media.

During the 1970s and 1980s Birmingham lost thousands of jobs. And like most working-class cities, people have been hit hard by the latest recession.

Blame the system not ordinary people!

Graeme Kemp, Wellington, Shropshire

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Flooding, Gay Marriage, St Medard and Mormons

HELP FOR people in various parts of the country who were flooded out during January and February may have been slow to arrive, if it came at all. But at least they do have ex-UKIP councillor David Silvester to thank for bringing the cause of it all to the nation's attention. And, as it turns out, it was nothing to do with climate change or the lack of dredging. It was all the fault of the gays. Or, more specifically, according to Mr Silvester, because David Cameron acted 'arrogantly against the gospel' in bringing about the Equal Marriage (same sex) Act.

'I don't have a problem with gay people' he explained. 'My prayer for them is they will be healed'. 'I am a man who prays every day for every member of the cabinet and for every member of the royal family and when, two years ago, I wrote to the Prime Minister to warn him there are repercussions for serious breaches of the coronation oath, such as this one has been, when I saw what followed I naturally assumed this was the result of them going against God's laws'. 'This is not new, this happened in the Old Testament – they were warned if they turned against God there would be pestilence, there would be war, there would be disasters'.

Well, you can't argue with that can you? Bloody gays. Perhaps UKIP will send them all home before it gets any worse.

One Lincolnshire vicar, though, who obviously believes there is not enough scientific evidence to blame gays for the flooding, has a different solution. According to the *Guardian* (1 February), the vicar got her flock to pray to St Medard to sort the problem out. St Medard, apparently, was a French bishop who died in 545 AD, and who has some clout in controlling the weather because he was once sheltered from the rain by an eagle.

Obviously if you want your prayers to be heard at the very top you've got to go through the proper channels. It's not *what* you know, it seems, it's *who* you know.

Our reliance on God to help us out, though, may soon be in jeopardy. Or, at least, any help from the Mormon God. A summons has been issued for him to appear before Westminster Magistrates Court on 14 March (or, rather for Mr Thomas Monson, the Mormon God's prophet on earth, to make the trip over from Salt Lake City to attend the court).

The summons, described in the *Telegraph* as 'one of the most unusual documents ever issued by a British court' came about because a disgruntled ex-member of the flock now believes that some of the Mormon's more bizarre teachings may amount to fraud.

The teachings in question include the 'fact' that Adam and Eve lived just six thousand years ago, that Native Americans are descended from a family of ancient Israelites and that the Book of Mormon was translated from ancient gold plates and revealed to their founder, Joseph Smith, by an angel.

The Church said that Mr Monson had no intention of attending the court hearing and dismissed the summons as containing 'bizarre allegations'.

Well, the Mormons should recognise bizarre allegations when they see them shouldn't they?

NW



PARTY NEWS

Socialists to stand in Euro elections



THE SOCIALIST Party is planning to contest Wales and the South East Region of England in May's elections to the European Parliament.

The South East Region is the biggest in the country. It covers the counties of Oxford, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, the Isle of White, Surrey, Sussex and Kent and so big urban centres such as Southampton, Reading, Brighton and Oxford. There are some 6

million electors (more than in many EU Member States) and 10 MEPs (among the current ones the notorious Nigel Farage).

If we contest Wales that will entitle us to a Party Election Broadcast in Wales, the first time in our history that we will have had one.

The election is by proportional representation of party lists. We will be presenting a full list of 10 in the South

East and 4 in Wales.

Election day is Thursday 22 May, so most of the campaigning will be from the end of April on. Any offers of help to distribute leaflets, write to the press, phone in to radio stations and the like, please contact election committee, by email at spgb@worldsocialism.org or by post to: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN



Owen Jones's hopeless agenda

WRITING IN the *Independent on Sunday* (26 January), ubiquitous Labour leftwinger Owen Jones proposed a nine-point 'Agenda for Hope'. It is essentially a wish-list of reforms to capitalism, as illustrated by the first of the points:

'A statutory living wage, with immediate effect, for large businesses and the public sector, and phased in for small and medium businesses over a five-year Parliament. This would save billions spent on social security each year by reducing subsidies to low-paying bosses, as well as stimulating the economy, creating jobs because of higher demand, stopping pay being undercut by cheap labour, and tackling the scandal of most of Britain's poor being in work. An honest day's pay for an honest day's work would finally be enshrined in law.'

The 'finally' is a nice touch since the campaign for a 'living wage' was started by the old ILP, then still part of the Labour Party, over 80 years ago in the 1920s. Since Jones has demonstrated in the past that he has some knowledge of Marx's ideas, he must have chosen the phrase 'an honest day's pay for an honest day's work' deliberately. It is of course a modern version of the demand for 'a fair day's wage for a fair day's work' which Marx, in a talk to British trade union leaders in 1865, described as a 'conservative motto' as opposed to the 'revolutionary watchword' of 'abolition of the wages system.'

Jones does not give a figure for what he considers to be a living wage. At the moment the so-called living wage which some employers and especially local councils have agreed to pay no one less than is £8.80 an hour in London and £7.65 in the rest of the country, compared with the legal minimum wage of £6.31 an hour. This 'living wage' is only about £15,000 for a year of full-time employment outside London. Although this would be an improvement on what many workers are getting now it is hardly a living wage in any reasonable sense of the word 'living'.

What Jones is advocating is a legally-decreed wage increase for millions of workers. This is unlikely to have the effect he intends. It could well 'save billions spent on social security each year by reducing subsidies to low-paying bosses'. The Tories are on to this too and favour an increase in the minimum wage for precisely this reason. On the other hand, it could lead to employers laying off workers or even going out of business, so augmenting the ranks of the unemployed and social security payments to them. Not that the cost of social security should be of concern to workers. It's only a problem for the capitalist class since they pay for it.

One thing it won't do is stimulate 'the economy, creating jobs because of higher demand.' Since the extra wages will have to be paid by employers this will not result in any 'higher demand'; the increase in demand resulting from higher wages (to the extent that it happens) would be offset by a fall in demand derived from employers' profits. It's a zero-sum game. So it won't stimulate the economy or create extra jobs. In fact, since it is profits not wages that drive the economy, the reduced profits could have the opposite effect.

Owen Jones has failed to grasp that capitalism is not a collection of random bad things that can be tackled piecemeal. It's an economic system with its own mode of functioning that cannot be reformed by legislation to work other than as a system that gives priority to profits not wages and which has to be done away with altogether in one revolutionary change.

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Nicaragua:

truth *will* out

MANY LIBERALS, including the newly elected mayor of New York, Bill De Blasio, were inspired by the Sandinista government of Daniel Ortega in the 1980s. Indeed it was difficult for anyone not have some sympathy for the Sandinistas. After all, they were being confronted by the might of the United States who were not only sponsoring acts of terrorism against them but actually engaging in acts of war by mining Nicaragua's ports, acts for which they were duly found guilty by the World Court (although they totally ignored the verdict). Nor could many help but admire their achievements in literacy and health-care.

Nevertheless, the Socialist Party could see through the false claims being presented that a Sandinista Nicaragua was in some way socialist. The *Socialist Standard* wrote at the time



Ortega

'Needless to say, the Socialist Party is hostile in every way to the Contra terrorists and their backers. But the enemy of an enemy is not necessarily a friend... Socialists do not support the state-capitalist government of Nicaragua and to the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign which implores us to do so we respond that our only support is for workers of all lands in their struggle against the capitalists of all lands, be they imperial exploiters or native ones, left or right wing' (July 1987).

Ortega may have been a Sandinista rebel who helped defeat the Somoza dictatorship but now he has managed to transform himself from 'revolutionary' leader to simply just another revolting capitalist ruler.

With the subsequent re-elections of Ortega's FSLN our cautionary counsel has been proved wise. In November 2013, Nicaragua's Foreign Minister visited the UK to promote his country's stable economy, potential for growth, infrastructure development and favorable fiscal legislation to international investments.

He underlined the political stability, attractive set of labour laws, tax incentives and the comparative advantage that his country offers to British and European investors.

Under the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), a trade and economic cooperation pact that includes Cuba, Bolivia, and Venezuela, Ortega, by presidential decree, established Councils of Citizen Power under the control of the Sandinista party to administer and distribute much of the social spending but which also provides an estimated \$3 - 500 million in funds to be personally administered by Ortega with no public accountability.

Since being reconciled with the Catholic Church, Ortega has become a strident opponent of abortion. In a country where the population is 85 percent Catholic it is always helpful in elections to have the blessing of the Church even if it means supporting a ban on therapeutic abortions that has set back women's rights. Even a pregnancy that cannot possibly result in a viable baby – an anencephalic or ectopic one – has to be carried to term. A pregnant woman with cancer has to have the baby first, then treatment for the cancer, no matter what the risk to her chances of survival. A woman who gets pregnant through an act of rape or incest has to have the baby. In 2012 the government forced a 12-year old girl who had been raped and impregnated by her stepfather to remain under 'state protection' in a Managua hospital until she gave birth. Sonia Castro, Nicaragua's Minister of Health, even anointed herself 'protector-in-chief,' making sure the child did not escape from the hospital.

The *Independent* wrote 'Today in Nicaragua, two years after the Sandinistas' return to power, there is no idealism, no poetry, no romance. The regime over which President Ortega presides is an anthem to brute cynicism. Or a parable of human weakness, the old story of what happens with idealists, always and everywhere, once they have tasted power. It is *Animal Farm* all over again' (21 Nov 2008).

The objective of socialists is to assist in the emancipation of the workers from our enslavement to the capitalist class. Ortega's Sandinistas have not betrayed their core principles or 'values'. Their socialist credentials were always weak and in fact they made no claim to being socialist. The Sandinista movement was officially designated 'a popular, democratic, and anti-imperialist revolution.' How often have disillusioned left liberals cried 'betrayal!?' It's a simple matter of understanding economic systems. No one need be fooled by propaganda spin.

ALJO



Nicaraguan street



A Tale of Two Constituencies

AT WHAT may have been a bad time for him David Cameron made the most of it, perhaps in the hope that the term A Falkirk Experience would go down in history as

epitomising the corruption of an election in order to gain power over a victorious puppet. Falkirk is a Scottish town which grew up in the Industrial Revolution, at the junction of two canals, into a major centre of the iron and steel industry. But it has not survived unchanged; where once they made carronades for the Royal Navy and pillar boxes for the post there are now what are called business parks and temples of retail such as Tesco, Asda and the Co-Op. Typical of such places in Scotland, Falkirk has been dominated by the Labour party, leaving any Tories like a threatened species. The MP between 2000 and 2012 was Eric Joyce but he was suspended from the Party after displaying a tendency to treat others with violence during a session in the Strangers' Bar at the Houses of Parliament. He has since then sat as an Independent while the local Labour Party has sorted out another, hopefully less impulsive, candidate.

Unite

But this was complicated by ruthless in-fighting driven by some over-active ambitions. The applicant favoured by the trade union Unite was Karie Murphy who, apart from a any other factor, is a friend of the union's General secretary Len McCluskey. It was quickly obvious that this was not to be a dispute among friends, settled by a hand shake. Ed Miliband described it as '...politics of the machine, politics of hatred'. The substance was that, as it was put by a Labour Party report, 'members were pressured into completing direct debit forms' for party membership; it was also alleged that some had been signed up into the party, through being in Unite, but without their knowledge. The matter was settled by the selection of Karen Whitfield to stand at the next election. In all it was a promising gift to Cameron, who made much of the influence of McCluskey on the Labour Party and what this said about the party's subservience nationally to the unions.

Deselection

Leaving the warring Labour factions in Falkirk and travelling south will bring you to North Yorkshire, where another constituency is looking for a candidate to contest the next general election. Thirsk and Malton is firmly Conservative, with Anne McIntosh winning the seat in 2010 on a majority of 11,281. It was not an uneventful victory for her. She had been previously elected in 1997 for the Vale of York and held the seat until it was abolished in 2006. She then applied to the Conservatives in Thirsk and Malton but her approach was not unanimously welcomed; she was selected as the candidate only after there had been an attempt to deselect her in August 2009. And when she won the seat in 2010 it was quickly apparent that the opposition to her was still strong. At present the reasons for this are confused; she has a reputation as a notably industrious MP but also as one liable to be aggressively divisive.

During a surgery when she was MP for the Vale of York she angered a constituent by her refusal to discuss local opposition to a proposed incinerator plant so that he tipped a pint of beer over her (the surgery was being held in a pub). More recently, an opponent in Thirsk has said that she is 'a silly little girl' and Boris Johnson or Nigel Farage would be preferable as a candidate. Another describes her as 'a few peas short of a casserole'... another as 'a menace'. In response she has referred to them as 'a small cabal... or 'a narrow clique'. The contest in which she won the candidature at Thirsk and Malton has been described as 'unpleasant, leading to 'deep divisions'.

Right Wing

All of this is rather surprising in view of McIntosh' steadfast right wing opinions. She is against same sex marriages and fertility rights. In a recent debate in the Commons she questioned the sense of appointing female

doctors because they would place 'a huge burden on the health service' by marrying and having children. Among other angry responses to this came from the wife of Andrew Mitchell – he of 'Plebgate' fame – who scorned her comments as 'not just insulting but a display of sexism that is simply not acceptable in this day and age'. (Of course McIntosh may have found some comfort in the applause from Melanie Phillips

in the *Daily Mail*). On wider issues she supported the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, is in favour of the Trident nuclear submarine, the hated 'bedroom tax', a fully privatised Royal Mail...

Candidate

It says something about the turmoil in the Thirsk and Malton Tories that it took them three attempts to deselect her – and even then only after it was discussed at a four-hour meeting. In defiance McIntosh declares that she will stand again at the 2015 election, presumably in the hope that this will expose some of the party's malaise. In all these events a central figure has been Party chairman Peter Halkett Kinsman Steveney, known as 'the galloping major' because, apart from holding that exalted military rank, he is also a retired Jockey Club stewards' secretary. Steveney was heavily criticised in a report by Tory HQ over the 'fundamentally flawed' process of overthrowing McIntosh. While the battle was raging Steveney made no secret that his preference for the seat is one Edward Legard, Old-Etonian, St. Andrews University, Sandhurst ex-Light Cavalry officer, now a barrister and a judge and – in case these are not sufficient qualification, heir to an hereditary baronetcy. After making the usual noises about his immaculate intentions for the constituency and how innocent he is in the current infighting, Legard has avoided committing himself.

In Kilmarnock and Thirsk and Malton we have two constituencies whose political parties assert that they represent vitally different methods of managing the capitalist system. The current disputes reveal that it is only the personalities which vary. Common to them all is the basic function of repressing and exploiting the people who vote for them.

IVAN



Above: Anne McIntosh. Right: Karie Murphy



The Miners' Strike

Remembered

One socialist recalls what made him class conscious

The 1984-85 Miners' Strike was a pivotal moment in my political education, a formative event in the development of my socialist class consciousness. After the death of Thatcher in April 2013 I was at a celebratory gathering in Trafalgar Square which was also attended by a few Geordie Miners who carried their North East Area NUM banner. In the old mining village of Goldthorpe in South Yorkshire an effigy of Thatcher was publicly burned. Seumas Milne wrote in *The Enemy*

Within that 'films such as *Billy Elliot* and *Brassed Off* rammed home the devastation of the mining communities wrought by the politically driven closures.' Recently there have been released cabinet papers that reveal the Tory government had a secret plan to close 75 pits at the cost of 65,000 jobs, and that the government used police tactics to escalate the dispute. The IPCC is currently undertaking a preliminary assessment to decide whether it should launch a full inquiry into the 'Battle of Orgreave.'

On two occasions having my birthday in February meant the candles on my birthday cake were the only light in our house. In February 1972 a miners' strike led to power cuts, and the defeat for the Tory government pay policy. Again in February 1974 a miners' strike caused power cuts but this time Heath called a snap election asking 'who governs? The Tories or the Miners?' The British electorate told Heath it was not him.

On 18 March 1979 an explosion at the Golborne Colliery near Wigan in the St Helens coalfield killed 10 miners with one survivor, a 20-year old apprentice electrician called Brian Rawsthorne. Following the explosion Golborne was visited by the Labour government Secretary of State for Energy Tony Benn who said: 'It is the most terrible tragedy. I have come to express sympathy with the families. The human cost of coal is still a very high cost and we must never take it for granted.'

On Boxing Day that year in Garswood, near Ashton-in-Makerfield my family were visiting my uncle who was a mining surveyor for the National Coal Board.

The young Brian Rawsthorne was also a guest that day. As recent as September 2011, a miner was killed at the Kellingley colliery in North Yorkshire, and 4 miners were killed at Gleison colliery in South Wales.

Workshop of the world

In the nineteenth century Britain's industrial position as the 'workshop of the world' (Disraeli 1838) – reflected in the bourgeois triumph of the Great Exhibition of 1851 – was based on coal. In 1865 in *The Coal Question* the leading economist of the



day, William Stanley Jevons wrote 'Coal in truth stands not beside but entirely above all other commodities. It is the material energy of the country, the universal aid, the factor in

everything we do, a material of such myriad qualities, of such miraculous powers.' Britain had huge coalfields in South Wales, Lancashire, South Yorkshire, the North East and Scotland, employment in coal mining hit a peak of 1.3 million workers in 1920 with a production peak of 287 million tons in 1913. In 1983 production was still over 100 million tons and close to 200,000 miners still worked in the industry.

In 1956 in *Coal is our Life*, Dennis et al wrote 'The prestige of the miner in the working class is higher than it has ever been' but in some quarters there was a growing realisation of the 'state capitalist' nature of the nationalised coal industry. VL Allen in *The Militancy of British Miners* (1981) wrote that 'there existed a group of politically articulate miners who argued for the emancipation of their fellow miners from the conditions which made them compliant, vulnerable and dispensable wage labour.' Milne observed a 'visceral capitalist class fear of miners emerging from the bowels of the earth to demand their rights which touched a raw nerve'.

On 2 March 1984 the Miners' Strike began at the Cortonwood Colliery near Wath-upon-Deane in South Yorkshire. On 6 March the government scrapped the 1974 NCB *Plan for Coal* and announced a closure plan. On 12 March the strike went national with 196,000 miners on strike. Chas Critcher in *Working Class Culture* (1979) wrote 'The miner may not think of wage labour or class consciousness as abstract categories, but he knows who pays his wages and what they get out of it, and hence sees that they are not on his side.'

At the end of March 1984 I heard the Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock speak about the Miners' Strike at Preston Polytechnic. Within days I had joined the Labour Party Young Socialists, was reading the *Militant* newspaper and essentially I had joined the Militant Tendency, a Trotskyist organisation. There followed public meetings on the Miners' Strike at the Preston Trade Union Centre, a *Militant* Rally in Blackburn, attending branch meetings, and selling *Militant* in Preston town centre. I read the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* by Marx and Engels but the most important book to my then comrades in Militant was Lenin's *What is to be Done?* which describes a disciplined, centralised 'vanguard' party of dedicated revolutionaries (ie Militant) bringing socialist consciousness to the working class. I was always hearing the word 'cadre' and was told the situation in Liverpool where Militant controlled the City Council was akin to 'Petrograd in 1917.' I also helped out in the Labour Party rooms at the May local elections.

In June I knocked on doors in Preston collecting food for striking miners' families in the Lancashire coalfields. There were 6,500 Lancashire miners at 20 collieries in the Manchester coalfield, 26 collieries in Wigan, 22 in St Helens and 18 in Burnley. The working class are capable of organising their own affairs in common and this was clearly demonstrated by the mining communities pooling their energies and resources and taking what they needed from a common store. As Engels wrote 'the humanity of the workers is constantly manifesting itself pleasantly. They have experienced hard times themselves, and can therefore feel for those in trouble, whence they are more approachable, friendlier, and less greedy for money,

though they need it far more than the property-holding class.'

18 June was a decisive day during the strike when 10,000 miners picketing at Orgreave coking plant in South Yorkshire were confronted by about 8,500 police from ten counties. The NUM planned to repeat the success of the picket at Saltley Coke Depot, Birmingham in 1972. At Orgreave coal was turned into coke for use in steel production and British Steel plants had been receiving 'dispensations': picket-permitted movements of coal to prevent damage to their furnaces. However it was discovered that British Steel was moving far more coal than the dispensations agreed. In the ensuing 'Battle of Orgreave' 93 miners were arrested, and 51 miners injured by the police. The BBC edited footage to alter the timeline of events to show police defending themselves from miners attacks when it was miners defending themselves against police attacks. Later 95 miners were charged with riot and unlawful assembly. In 1991 South Yorkshire police paid £425,000 to settle civil actions brought by 39 miners for what happened at and after Orgreave including for assault, wrongful arrest and malicious prosecution, but no police officer was ever disciplined for any misconduct.

In *The Enemy Within* Seamus Milne details the Tory government, police, MI5 and Special Branch tactics in the class war against the miners; tapping phones, checking bank deposits, forging documents, using agents provocateurs, providing disinformation to the media, surveillance of miners and the NUM, the DHSS withholding benefits to striking families, restrictive bail conditions and courts sequestering NUM funds. There was the creation of what ostensibly was a national police force, the police used as a paramilitary force, the police using road-block strategy stopping cars and buses and turning them back hundreds of miles from their destinations, and arresting miners if they strayed outside their home county. The criminal law was used against the miners even though picketing including secondary picketing was not an offence in criminal law.

The Left

A few days after Orgreave I was in Leyland for a miners rally where I heard speeches by Dennis Skinner, ex-miner and Labour MP for Bolsover in the Derbyshire coalfield, and Peter Heathfield, NUM General Secretary. A 'Second Front' of strikes in the face of Tory anti-trade union legislation on secondary picketing was opened up in July with a 2 weeks national dock strike prompted by the use of contractors to unload iron ore at Immingham Docks. There were also prolonged 'wildcat' strikes at power stations in the Aire, Calder, Wharfe, and Ouse valleys in Yorkshire. Railway workers did not move coal trucks, and the railway workers at Shirebrook marshalling yards in Nottinghamshire right in the heart of scab country refused to move one ounce of coal throughout the year-long strike.

In September I came to London to read politics and philosophy at Thames Polytechnic in Woolwich, South East London. Left-wing politics were popular at the Poly; the SWP, the Labour Club which comprised the LPYS, i.e. Militant Tendency, the Socialist Labour Group, and the IMG. My first gig at the Poly in the Student Union Cellar Bar was a Miners' Benefit with The Three Johns and Hagar the Womb, a feminist anarcho-punk band.

The Miners' Support Group was linked to the Kent NUM and the 3,000 miners at Betteshanger, Snowdown, and Tilmanstone collieries. In Plumstead I knocked on doors collecting food for striking miners' families in the Kent coalfield.

NACODS, the Pit Deputies and safety officials union, wanted the NCB to withdraw the pit closure plan and a ballot on strike action was 82 percent in favour. Strike action was called off when the NCB and Government promised a modified colliery review procedure which was reneged on. If NACODS had gone on strike could the miners have won the strike?

In November I travelled on a hired bus with the Miners' Support Group and Labour Club to the NUM picket line at West Thurrock Power Station in Essex. Near to Christmas young miners from the Betteshanger Colliery in the Kent coalfield visited the Polytechnic and we spent hours drinking with them in the student union bars and later smoking hashish at our house in Charlton.

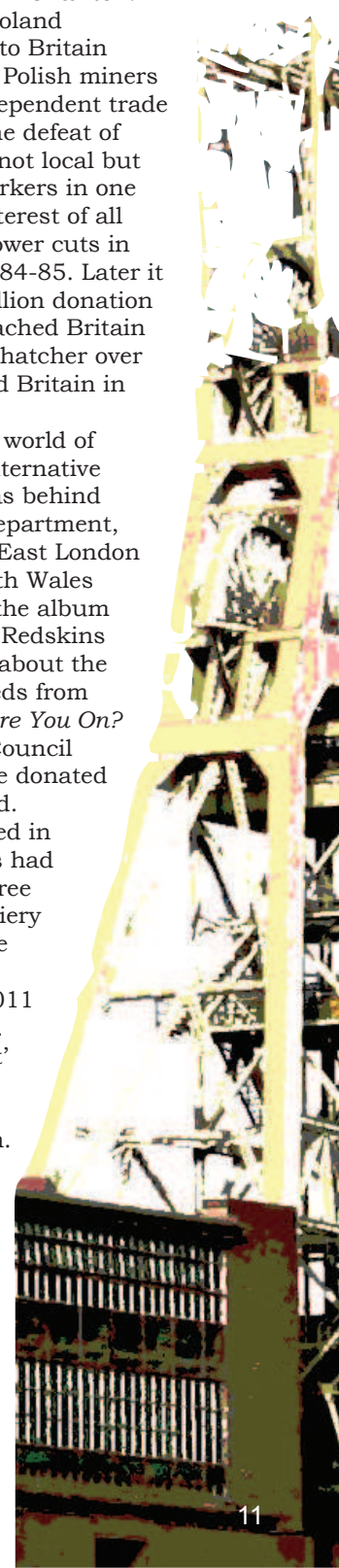
During the strike state capitalist Poland exported cheap, non-unionised coal to Britain demonstrating that the defeat of the Polish miners in their earlier efforts to form an independent trade union (*Solidarnosc*) contributed to the defeat of the British miners. The class war is not local but international and the interests of workers in one part of the world are the common interest of all workers. There were no power cuts in Britain in the winter of 1984-85. Later it was revealed that a \$1 million donation by Soviet miners never reached Britain through the influence of Thatcher over Gorbachev when he visited Britain in December 1984.

Like many others in the world of art or performance, the 'alternative music scene' I followed was behind the Miners' Strike. Test Department, from New Cross in South East London collaborated with the South Wales Striking Miners Choir on the album *Shoulder to Shoulder*. The Redskins sang *Keep on Keepin' On!* about the Miners' Strike, and proceeds from Billy Bragg's *Which Side are You On?* and Paul Weller and the Council Collective's *Soul Deep* were donated to the striking miners fund.

Eventually, the Miners' Strike ended in defeat on 3 March 1985. Two miners had been killed during the strike, and three teenagers died picking coal from colliery waste heaps. During the strike police arrested 11,312 miners in England, Scotland and Wales. In December 2011 only 3,000 miners were left at 9 pits.

At the end of the strike I left 'leftist' politics and began over 25 years of counter-culturalism, beatnik-hipsterism, and armchair-anarchism. Then I discovered Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, the Socialist Party of Great Britain and realised the miners needed to go beyond fighting over wages and conditions in the industrial struggle and instead 'ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, abolition of the wages system.'

STEVE CLAYTON





Ukraine - Between Oranges and Blues

The basic pattern of political confrontation in Ukraine has remained the same ever since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. The two camps in Ukrainian politics are labelled Oranges and Blues – a usage that has its origin in the “Orange Revolution” of late 2004 and early 2005 that brought Viktor Yushchenko to power. The main features of the Orange and Blue camps are shown in the Table.

The regional division

The underlying division is basically regional in nature. Most people in the western and central parts of Ukraine, including the capital Kiev, support the Oranges, while most people in the country’s eastern and southern regions support the Blues. The regional division shows itself not only in politics but also in differences of language, historical background, economic structure and attitudes toward other countries.

known as Galicia, belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire before World War One and to Poland between the wars. It is overwhelmingly Ukrainian-speaking (except for some border areas) and the most fervently nationalist and anti-Russian part of the country.

East Ukraine, especially the Don coal basin (Donbas), formed an integral part of the late tsarist and Soviet industrial complexes and therefore depends on close ties with Russia. Many of its inhabitants speak Russian or a mixed Russian-Ukrainian dialect called *Surzhyk*. This does not mean that they do not regard themselves as Ukrainians, but they view Russian and Ukrainian identities as closely related rather than opposed to one another.

The southern and central regions of Ukraine are in some ways intermediate between East and West Ukraine, with the south more like the east and the centre somewhat more like the west.

Despite the regional division, all parts of Ukraine are similar in important respects. The dominant social group in all regions now consists of ‘oligarchs’ – individuals who made fortunes by exploiting their close connections in government and acquiring state-owned assets on the cheap. It is estimated that just fifty oligarchs control 85 percent of the country’s GDP. Many of them have backgrounds in organized crime.

Oligarchs own the mass media and football clubs as well as banks and means of production. Most if not all of Ukraine’s numerous political parties are funded, controlled or even directly led by an oligarch or by a small group of oligarchs. This includes political parties with names that suggest a leftist or environmentalist orientation, such as the United Social Democratic Party of Ukraine and the Party of Greens of Ukraine.

The oligarchs are themselves divided along geographical, political and other lines. There are said to be rival oligarchic ‘clans’ based in different cities – Kiev, Donetsk, Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkov, etc. This is probably an oversimplified picture. In any case, the oligarchs have shared class interests vis-à-vis the rest of the population. If they ever do face a serious challenge from below, they can be expected to form a united front. We shall then also see how much they really care about human rights.

Choice of external orientation

Maintaining political stability in Ukraine depends, among other things, on

Mostly agricultural West Ukraine, also

The oligarchs

THE TWO MAIN CAMPS IN UKRAINIAN POLITICS

BASIC FEATURES

Geography

Languages

Historical ties

External orientation

Chief sectors

Dominant party

Recent presidents

Oligarchic clans

ORANGE

West and Central Ukraine including Kiev
Ukrainian
Austro-Hungary, Poland
Europe (EU), the West
Agriculture, light industry
None – shifting coalitions
Yushchenko (2005–2010)
Kiev

BLUE

East and South Ukraine
Ukrainian, Russian, *surzhyk*
Russia
Russia, post-Soviet region
Mining, heavy industry, ports
Party of Regions *
Yanukovich (2010–)
Donetsk, Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkov

* In the 1990s the dominant parties were the Socialist Party of Ukraine (SPU) and/or the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU).

reconciling the essential interests of its various regions. In some policy areas this has been achieved. One example is the working compromise on the language issue. While Russian is not recognized as a second state language alongside Ukrainian, no serious attempt has been made to restrict the use of Russian in places where Russian speakers are in the majority. Another is Ukraine's status as a buffer zone outside both NATO and the Russian-led military alliance of post-Soviet states (the Collective Security Treaty Organization).

On some issues, however, such a compromise is not feasible. One such issue is the choice of an external orientation for Ukraine's economy. Should Ukraine go ahead with the Association Agreement it has negotiated with the EU? Or should it join the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC) – the post-Soviet customs union that now includes Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and (since last September) Armenia?

In November Blue President Viktor Yanukovich, faced with the alarming prospect of the severance of East Ukraine's economic ties with Russia, announced that he would not sign the agreement with the EU after all. Thereby he set off the Orange protests and the current crisis and, it now seems, his own downfall.

“The Orange-Blue confrontation in Ukraine is basically a conflict between two groups of oligarchs”

This time, it seems, Ukraine has to make a definite choice. It cannot move toward membership in *both* the EU and the EAEC. That is unacceptable to both organizations. Ukraine would become the gap through which Russian or Kazakh goods (say) could enter the EU or German or Polish goods enter the EAEC, effectively turning Europe and the post-Soviet region into a single customs union. In fact, Ukraine will not even get observer status at the EAEC if it enters into an Association Agreement with the EU (Interfax-Ukraine, June 14, 2013).

Who are the Blues?

Western capitalist propaganda associates the Blues with the Soviet legacy of corrupt authoritarian rule, inefficient protectionism and opposition to thoroughgoing 'market reform'. Conversely, some Western leftists react to the pro-Orange slant of that propaganda by viewing the Blues as 'anti-imperialist' allies, in accordance with the dubious logic that 'the enemy of my

enemy is my friend'.

The linkage of the Blues to the Soviet past had some basis in the first few years after the collapse of the Soviet system. At that time the dominant parties in East Ukraine were the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) and/or the Socialist Party of Ukraine (SPU) (which served as a substitute for the CPU at the period when the CPU was illegal). These parties represented old Soviet officials and managers of state industry who stood to lose their status and privileges in the transition from state to private capitalism.

However, these are now spent forces. Although some new Blue groups have arisen that appeal to nostalgia for the Soviet period – in particular, Natalya Vitrenko's Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine – since 2006 the dominant party in the east has been the Party of Regions.

It is hard to understand how anyone could see anything 'left-wing' in the Party of Regions. Its funders and parliamentarians include several of the country's most prominent 'oligarchs', including Rinat Akhmetov (the wealthiest person in Ukraine whose diverse assets have been valued at up to \$28.4 billion) and Dmytro Firtash (whose main interests are in gas and titanium). The president's son Alexander Yanukovich has also made quite a pile for himself, no doubt



with assistance from his father, although with assets worth only \$510 million he is hardly in the same league as the leading players.

Who are the Oranges?

Western propaganda portrays the Oranges as freedom-loving citizens struggling to establish the ideal Western model of clean government, competitive market capitalism, democracy and human rights. This picture completely ignores two important facts.

First, the Orange and Blue parties are equally dependent on the financial support of oligarchs (possibly with a few minor exceptions on both sides). The leading Orange oligarch is Igor ('Benya') Kolomoisky, whose assets are worth \$6.2

Nationalists in interwar Galicia under Polish rule. Although the main base of *Svoboda* is in West Ukraine, in the 2012 elections it achieved a breakthrough from regional to national politics, winning over 10 percent of votes and 38 out of 450 seats in parliament.

Members of *Svoboda* are active participants in the current protests. They have been especially active in making practical arrangements for the protests, such as the provision of food, toilets and first aid (extreme nationalists – Russian nationalists in this case – seized a similar role in the anti-Putin protests in Moscow). *Svoboda* has also claimed the credit for toppling the Lenin monument in Kiev, although it is not clear who actually performed this feat.

and particularly in CIS countries... [He has] extensive business experience in Eastern Europe'. The corresponding profile for Akhmetov (Blue) focuses solely on his holdings in Ukraine. However, Firtash (Blue) does seem to have significant interests in Europe.

This does not mean that the protestors themselves view their cause in such grubby terms. There is no reason to doubt that the great majority of them sincerely believe that they are fighting for democracy, clean government, the rule of law and European civilization. In fact, many do not support any party or politician. One observer reported from Kiev in late November that two separate rallies were taking place on different squares – one organised by the Orange



billion, making him the second or third richest person in Ukraine. Whatever the programmes of Orange parties may say about 'fighting corruption' or 'level playing fields', their oligarchic backers are wedded to the business model of 'crony capitalism' and most unlikely to tolerate any serious attempt to disentangle business from politics.

Second, there are good reasons to doubt the 'democratic' credentials of the Orange camp. Quite apart from the question of the compatibility of genuine democracy with any form of capitalism, the current Orange coalition includes the *Svoboda* (Freedom) party of Oleh Tiahnybok.

This party, which until 2004 was called the Social-National Party of Ukraine, adheres to the semi-fascist ideology of 'organic' Ukrainian nationalism invented by the Organization of Ukrainian

The nature of the protests

The Orange-Blue confrontation in Ukraine is basically a conflict between two groups of oligarchs and politicians over the choice of an external orientation of the country – toward Europe and the West or toward Russia and the post-Soviet region.

A Marxian analyst might expect that the interests and connections of the Blue oligarchs would be mainly confined to the post-Soviet region while those of the Orange oligarchs would extend to Europe or even further afield. This hypothesis has yet to be properly verified, but there are certain indications of at least a tendency in this direction.

Thus, according to his *Forbes* profile, Kolomoisky (Orange) 'is a prominent international businessman with diversified business interests, including ownership of significant industrial assets worldwide

political parties, the other by 'young non-partisan activists inspired by the Occupy movement' (louisproyekt.org/2013/12/26/whats-going-on-in-the-ukraine).

Protests have also been held in the cities of East Ukraine, although in the east the Orange parties are not able to muster many supporters – at least by comparison with the big counter-rallies being held in support of the government. Here again, news reports suggest that some protests have been simply in support of democratic rights and against corruption, without signs of allegiance to either the Blue or the Orange camp. So there is some potential at the grassroots for overcoming the regional division and developing a genuinely democratic and eventually socialist politics.

STEFAN

Davos Elites

Think Globally, Act Greedily

At the annual World Economic Forum, global elites gather to dream about solving the problems of capitalism through cooperation.

‘Every capitalist knows this about *his* worker, that he does not relate to him as producer to consumer, and [he therefore] wishes to restrict his consumption, i.e. his ability to exchange, his wage, as much as possible. Of course he would like the workers of *other* capitalists to be the greatest consumers possible of his own commodity. But this is just how the illusion arises – true for the individual capitalist as distinct from all the others – that apart from his workers the whole remaining working class confronts him as consumer and participant in exchange, as money-spender, and not as worker.’ (*Grundrisse*; my emphasis)

Apologies for plunging straight into a quote from Marx to begin this article, but it seems related to the illusion that animates the World Economic Forum, an annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland of capitalist movers and shakers, movie-star wankers, professional do-gooders, and Bono.

One striking thing about this elite gathering is how its participants believe that capitalists (or at least *other* capitalists) might look beyond their own profit interests to solve some of the problems that their beloved profit system generates.

Professor Schwab has a dream

The first WEF was held in January 1971, under the impetus of Klaus Schwab, a German economist who remains the event’s executive chairman. At first the meeting only brought together European capitalists, and it was called the European Management Forum (renamed the World Economic Forum in 1987).

The official WEF website says that Professor Schwab’s “inspiration” for creating the Forum was the “stakeholder principle,” which states that “the management of an enterprise is not “only accountable to



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Above: Bono. Below: Klaus Schwab



its shareholders but must also serve the interests of all stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers and, more broadly, government, civil society and any others who may be affected or concerned by its operations.”

You might say, then, that the

Forum’s underlying concept is the idea – or the plea, really – that capitalists should broaden their vision beyond the narrow realm of their own profit chasing.

Today the WEF describes its mission as “improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.”

“We live in a fast-moving, highly interconnected world, and our existing systems, structures and formal institutions no longer suffice,” Schwab notes. “Pressing global problems can arise quickly and without warning. . . . Today, to address these issues, the world needs a level of global cooperation that is increasingly difficult to attain, precisely due to the growing complexities and interdependencies in the world.”

The WEF is meant to serve as a mechanism for this global cooperation. And it would be hard to argue against the need for cooperation, or to disagree with the description of today’s world as increasingly interdependent and interconnected.

But it is also pretty clear that there are some serious limits to the degree of cooperation possible between business leaders (and their political lackeys), not only in different countries but within their own.

And the reason is again related, in some ways, to that quote from Marx. As he points out, although it might *seem* logical for capitalists to cooperatively raise the living standards of workers (as potential consumers), each capitalist firm must also extract from its own workers as much surplus value as it can to remain competitive – for the unprofitable capitalist will not remain a capitalist for long.

Genuine cooperation to solve fundamental problems is out of the question in a society where there

are not only irreconcilable class differences, but conflicts between the capitalists themselves, who are competing against each other in domestic and global markets.

Lots of problems, few solutions

Yet the WEF remains upbeat about the potential for alleviating global problems through cooperation spearheaded by business leaders. Its website claims that the “Forum’s experience since its foundation in 1971 shows there are few issues that cannot be adequately progressed by convening the most relevant actors from all sectors – business, government and civil society – in a high-level, informal environment of trust.”

But the experience of seeing the WEF, every year, address the

violence, serious and persistent human rights violations, and threats from organized crime and terrorist networks.”

And then, in the very next sentence, we are told that, “Viewed through a different lens, however, today’s fragile states are potentially tomorrow’s emerging markets. More than three-quarters of states classified as ‘fragile’ possess extensive mineral and energy resources and post impressive growth rates.”

Similar examples can be found in the WEF report, ‘*Outlook on the Global Agenda 2014*,’ which lists the ten “most pressing issues” of the coming year; these include widening income disparities, persistent unemployment, diminishing confidence in economic policies, and

and a lack of solutions is on display in the WEF’s *Global Risks Report*, listing the “ten global risks of highest concern.”

The top risk for 2014 is “financial crises in key economies,” followed by such problems as “structurally high unemployment/underemployment,” “severe income disparity,” and “global governance failure,” as well as problems related to the natural environment. The report reads like an indictment of capitalism, even though it tries to claim that the problems can be solved or alleviated, provided there is adequate global leadership.

Conspiracy or dunces?

The conspiracy theorist might like to imagine gatherings such as the Forum at Davos as rather sinister events, where corporate elites hatch their evil plans. But that is almost a comforting notion; as if the capitalist system could yield to plans or control, rather than simply being the composite of all the narrow-minded economic actors chasing after their own profits by whatever means necessary.

In fact, the business savvy of global corporate elites does not lend them the power to shape, or even foresee, the future direction of capitalism. They are along for the ride like the rest of us, although travelling first-class.

“Cautiously optimistic” is the verdict most likely to be offered by one of these elites when asked to comment on where the global economy is headed in 2014 and beyond. In other words, “Fuck if I know.”

But that is not to suggest that the problem comes down to a lack of intelligence on the part of those elites, as Leftists are prone to argue. None of us can predict, exactly, what the coming years will bring for the capitalist economy, just as Marx, in his day, was not able to predict the exact moment when a general crisis might break out. Certainly we can be “confidently pessimistic,” as Marx was, about what our life will generally be like under capitalism, knowing its fundamental contradictions, but that does not make us fortune tellers.

What we can feel safe to predict, though, is that the comforting talk at Davos about working together to improve the world for all “stakeholders” won’t do much if anything to change the actual behaviour of capitalists and capitalism.

MIKE SCHAUERTE



An emerging market?

same sorts of global problems – unemployment, environmental devastation, gender inequality, poverty, corruption, armed conflict, and so on – suggests that some issues have hardly been ‘progressed’ at all.

The gap between the awareness of the problems, and the inability to do much about them, is striking. In its numerous reports, the WEF list up issues that attest to the dismal reality of capitalism, but in most cases offers only the vaguest proposals or wishful thinking in response.

For instance, its Global Agenda Council on Fragile States and Conflict Prevention notes that, “Some 1.5 billion people in an estimated 40 countries live in an environment marked by persistent conflict and fragility . . . confronted by a myriad of simultaneous and often overwhelming challenges, including armed conflict or political

a lack of values in leadership.

After the report notes, for instance, how “growing income inequality is an issue of central importance” and lists various concrete manifestations of this inequality, it clings to the haziest of solutions:

“In order to counteract income inequality, it’s essential to tackle poverty in an integrated way that has a long-term impact. We need to give people the capacity to be resilient, to take on challenges and to learn the skills they need to work toward more prosperous futures.”

Similarly, the report recognizes that the world faces “persistent structural unemployment” (and is careful to warn that it will escalate social unrest if not addressed), but can only offer the vague hope that governments will “create regulatory structures that encourage employment and economic stability.”

The same contrast between a fairly clear recognition of the problems



The Maoist insurgency in India

The Adivasis, the original people of India, are among the poorest people in the country. Infant mortality amongst Adivasis (from *adi* meaning from the earliest times or Scheduled Tribes – of which there are 635 distinct groups) is 57 percent, and child malnutrition 73 percent (the national average is the highest in the world at 48 percent), and 42 percent of under fives are undernourished.

The objective of the 'Communist Party of India (Maoist)', also called the 'Naxalites', is the armed overthrow of the Indian state and the creation of a 'socialist-communist' government. The Maoists insurgents do not consider the Indian electoral system to be democratic, but rather a tool that benefits the landlord and capitalist classes. The Naxalite insurgency (numbering around 20,000 armed fighters with 50,000 supporters) has spread over 40 percent of India's land area, encompassing 20 of the country's 28 states. The seven most affected Indian states in terms of fatalities are Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Orissa, Bihar, and Andhra Pradesh, in that order. The Indian state's response to the Maoist challenge has been to send 81,000 paramilitary troops. In addition to paramilitary troops, the state has also used death squads known as Salwa Judum (SJ), meaning Purification Hunt. (The Indian Supreme Court declared the SJ illegal in 2011 and ordered the Chattisgarh government to disband it).

The state of Jharkhand in eastern India is a main focus of the insurgency. Deep within the Saranda forest in the state (where Adivasis make up 26 percent of the population) lies the world's largest deposit of iron-ore. The Jharkhand government has signed 42 Memorandums of Understanding with various large iron and steel companies. The mining giants are firmly in residence in the north eastern state, which is now a fully militarised zone, and there are over a hundred bases with a total of 50,000 official paramilitary troops involved in military action, plus the mining corporations' security forces.

Says Indigenous activist Gladson Dungdung, convener of the Jharkhand Indigenous Peoples' Forum:

'The government has been helping in securing land, water, and minerals for the corporate giants through military operations. In Saranda in June, July, and August 2011, there were three massive operations: Operation Monsoon, Operation Bravo Boy, and Operation Anaconda. The security forces killed two Adivasis, raped several women, and tortured more than 500 Adivasis. They also disrupted the Adivasis food grain supply, destroyed the harvest, ate livestock, and destroyed all official identification papers of the Adivasis (ration cards, voter ID, land titles). The Adivasis were forced to leave their villages and they only returned after our intervention. The end result is that the government gave mining leases to 19 mining companies in the region including Tata, Mittal and others.' Dungdung goes on, 'Today, we live in the corporate Indian state, not in a welfare state. The government makes all the laws and policies in favour of the corporate houses... The state is simply not bothered about its people. See the example of the state of Chattisgarh, where 644 villages were forcibly vacated by Salwa Judum and handed over to corporations.'

According to Xavier Dias, spokesperson for the Jharkhand Mines Area Coordination Committee, the insurgents also attack Adivasi villages, extort money from mining companies, and protect the ones that are grabbing land from Adivasis. He says:

'No corporate boss has so far been killed by the Maoists. When the Maoists call a general strike, those companies that pay levies to them are allowed to function and the rest are attacked. I do not believe that a mining company can function here without paying levies to the Maoists. Jharkhand is the place from where Maoists finance their operations in other states, too.'

Xavier Dias, however, admits that 'there are places where the Maoists are providing some good services to the Adivasis, such as Bastar [a town] in the state of

Chattisgarh'. According to Al Jazeera in many of these places the insurgents have organised the Adivasis and taken up community projects to provide services the government doesn't. One village leader told Al Jazeera that the Maoists frequently visited their villages, and 'treated everyone equally.' Dias does not think that the Maoists are corrupt, but considers them 'misguided' and disagrees that armed struggle is the way to solve India's class and Adivasi problems.

Dungdung is also critical of the Maoists: 'As far my knowledge and experience is concerned, they are not fighting for the Adivasis. Instead, they have created more problems for the democratic people's movement. It's very easy for the government to call these democratic struggles Maoist and suppress them. I think the Maoists are part of the problem, not the solution.' As Dungdung points out 'The government claims that its troops are there to counter the Maoists, but in actuality it is the democratic movements such as people resisting land grabs or fighting police repression that are intimidated into silence. By creating this drastic panic among the people, the corporations are free to suck out the minerals and forest resources.'

Some Adivasi groups have now formed their own resistance movements – in Orissa for example, several tribes came together to form the Chasi Mulia Sangh, a 5,000 strong tribal land movement unconnected to the Maoists (they assert). Armed with traditional weapons they are fighting for human rights and collective tribal ownership of their ancestral lands. They 'claim they are caught between the two fires of an escalating Maoists/Naxalite insurgency and the government's paramilitary backlash'.

Marx described 'primitive accumulation' as 'The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil, is the basis of the whole process.' It is still going on. Capitalism is an insatiable monster as far as profits are concerned. Human misery is of no concern where the profit motive reigns supreme.

Sources: Maoist Insurgency Spreads by Asad Ismi; Land Conflict And Injustice: Development In 'New India' By Graham Peebles

ALJO

OBITUARY

Florrie Barwick

Florrie was a socialist who enjoyed being with other socialists at meetings and conferences and always brought cakes as a contribution to refreshments. During one Conference lunch break Florrie related how on return from evacuation at age 13 she had been given a copy of the *Socialist Standard* by her father, and became a lifelong supporter of the socialist aim. She was proud to have a letter published in the *Standard* ('World Without Money' June 2012) where she wrote of a better way to live 'on this great planet of ours. A global moneyless society for the whole human race. Co-operation not competition.'

Over the years she took every opportunity to pass on copies of the *Standard* and various leaflets. Her neighbours as well as family were all aware of her views, with Florrie even speaking of socialism to the paramedic on the way to hospital after her accident sustained when at Head Office for a meeting in September. Florrie recovered well from the injury and subsequent operation, but sadly died from pneumonia on 10 January aged 85 years. We extend condolences to her family and friends.

PD



Labour is all capitalist now

IN HIS column in the *Times* (24 January) former Blair speechwriter Philip Collins recounted how he had met a 'nameless plutocrat' in Davos this year who had told him that Labour, despite its protestations to the contrary, was anti-business and that Miliband was indulging in 'intellectual Marxism'. How ungrateful and how weird is the idea some people have of Marxism.

Collins commented:

'Mr Miliband does think Marx is a better prophet of capitalism than those who cannot see beyond their own profits. Quite right too. Business people believe in competition just so long as they are benefiting from it. They soon realise competition means somebody else might take their winnings. Echoing Adam Smith on the conspiracies that businessmen practised against the public, Marx pointed out capitalism's inexorable tendency towards monopoly. Competition, in other words, produces its own grave-diggers.'

This is alright, except that Marx didn't see all industries as necessarily ending up as a monopoly. He wrote rather of the concentration of production in bigger and bigger productive units and of the centralisation of the control of these by a 'constantly diminishing number of magnates of capital' (*Capital*, volume 1, chapter 32 on 'The Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation'). For him, this was an expression of the fact that production had already become 'socialised', operated by co-operative labour of the working class as a whole. He envisaged that eventually the working class would organise to bring ownership and control into line with productive reality and 'expropriate the expropriators,' ushering in a socialist society based on the common ownership of land and industry with production directly for use not profit. This hasn't happened but 'intellectual Marxism' still has to see this as being the future for humanity.

Labour's answer to monopoly is not this (of course). It's more competition. Miliband's ambition, according to Collins, is to 'reform capitalism'. Or, as shadow business Chuka Umunna told the *Financial Times* (16 January):

'We are all capitalists now. The question is, what sort of capitalism do we want? We embrace free markets but we want competitive and free markets and more responsible capitalism.'

This is the opposite of what socialists want. Labour wants to mend capitalism; we want to end it.

Labour is not anti-capitalist or anti-business at all. Most 'nameless plutocrats' and 'magnates of capital' will know this perfectly well, but this hasn't prevented them, and their supporters in the Tory party (the party of the rich, as most people recognise), raising a howl of protest at a rather innocuous Labour promise to restore the 50 percent rate of tax on that part of anyone's income over £150,000 a year.

There is nothing anti-business about this as it is a tax on personal income whereas the aim of capitalist production is to extract and accumulate profits as more capital. It is not to provide a privileged income for capitalists, though of course it does do this. The 'entrepreneurs' (as capitalists prefer to call themselves these days) who London *Evening Standard* columnist Richard Godwin said he had met were behaving more capitalistically:

'When they started their businesses, they had neither the means nor the inclination to withdraw a six-figure salary for themselves. They preferred to reinvest' (29 January).

But the plutocrats and magnates are people and they like their privileged income and the lifestyle it enables them to enjoy. In complaining about an increase in their income tax they are not being pro-business. They are being pro-themselves. As Godwin put it, 'That's not entrepreneurship – it's self-interest.'



Children of the Sun

THE MAXIM Gorky play *Children of the Sun* directed by Howard Davies was performed last year at the National Theatre in London.

The play captures the unease and violence of what the historian Lionel Kochan called the 'dress rehearsal for revolution' in Russia in 1905. Gorky wrote the play while imprisoned for accusing the Tsar of the massacre of 1,000 workers on 'Bloody Sunday' in January 1905 outside the Winter Palace in St Petersburg. For Kochan 'this was the spark that set alight the flames of revolution. In all social groups revolt flared up. By the end of January nearly half a million workmen were on strike. The professional intelligentsia joined in.' A 'soviet' in St Petersburg 'formed of some 500 delegates elected by about 200,000 workers, represented the peak of working-class achievement. It was a spontaneous creation. But it was a lesson in revolution, not the revolution itself'.

The *Children of the Sun* are a group of privileged, self-absorbed, middle class intelligentsia who are floundering and philosophising about the world, who sense revolution is in the air but lack vision, energy and dynamism. Geoffrey Streatfield is amiable as Protassov, the 'student of natural science' who is prescient about the role of science in the future but blind to romantic advances, and the philandering around him. Protassov's sister Lisa played by Emma Lotfield is anguished by the harsh reality of the suffering peasantry while his wife Elyena played by Justine Mitchell knows something is wrong, of the need for action, and embodies the revolutionary spirit.

When the play had its premiere at the Moscow Art Theatre in October 1905, the atmosphere was tense, and 'the audience panicked when they mistook the arrival of the protesting workers at the end of the play, for a real demonstration entering the theatre from the streets' (Cynthia Marsh). Stanislavsky wrote that the role of the Moscow Art Theatre was 'not a simple private affair but a social task. Never forget that we are striving to brighten the dark existence of the poor classes.'

Gorky's father was a joiner, and Tolstoy called Gorky 'a real man of the people.' Gorky had worked as a skivvy in a shoe shop, in a bakery, as an errand boy, a stevedore, a dishwasher on a River Volga steamer, and a railway nightwatchman before educating himself and becoming a jobbing journalist and a Marxist.

The 1905 Revolution was suppressed with 14,000 people executed and 75,000 imprisoned. Gorky wrote 'our sick society will not become healthy until the sources of light, beauty and wisdom have become accessible to everyone.'

Bermuda Triangle Test Transmission Engineers

THE BERMUDA Triangle Test Transmission Engineers (BTTE) are the live performance extension of a trio of sound artists: Melanie Clifford, Howard Jacques and Nick Wilsdon who produce the BTTE radio programme for the London radio arts station Resonance 104.4 fm. Last October BTTE presented their *Little Red Set*: 'dialectical cabaret in

song, sound and exquisite hope' at the Club Integral at the Grosvenor pub in Stockwell, South London.

BTTE sang in Magyar *Hidegen Fújnak a Szelek* (*Cold Winds are Blowing*), a Hungarian folk song, the music collected by Zoltan Kallos in 1969 in Ördöngösfüzes in Mezősegy, today in Romania. The folk song is a prisoners' song, a yearning to be free, to break the chains of oppression, reminding us of the Magyar working class attempts at controlling their own lives in the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic or the 1956 Hungarian revolution which was crushed by the Russian Army.

The Song of Investment Capital Overseas written by Chris Cutler and Fred Frith of Avant-rock group Art Bears in 1980 is a satire on capitalist globalisation: 'I empty villages, I burn their houses down, I set up factories, Lay out plantations, And bring prosperity to the poorer nations.'

BTTE sang in German *Epitaph 1919: Die rote Rosa* written by Bertolt Brecht and set to music in 1928 by Kurt Weill as *The Berlin Requiem*: 'Red Rosa now has vanished too. Where she lies is hid from view. She told the poor what life is about, And so the rich have rubbed her out.' Marxist revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg was murdered by Freikorps troops during the Spartacist working class uprising in Berlin in January 1919.

The Spanish *El derecho de vivir en paz* (*The Right to Live in Peace*) was written by Chilean folk singer Victor Jara who was murdered in the coup which overthrew the Allende government in 1973.

They finished with *The Internationale* written by Eugène Pottier: 'if these vultures disappeared one of these days, the sun will shine forever, this is the final struggle, let us group together and tomorrow the Internationale will be the human race.' It was written during the 1871 Paris Commune, of which Edouard Vaillant wrote: 'If socialism wasn't born of the Commune, it is from the Commune that dates that portion of international revolution that no longer wants to give battle in a city in order to be surrounded and crushed, but which instead wants, at the head of the proletarians of each and every country, to attack national and international reaction and put an end to the capitalist regime.'

STEVE CLAYTON



Municipal reformism

***Militant Liverpool: A City on the Edge* by Diane Frost and Peter North, Liverpool University Press, 2013, 218 pages, £13.22.**



Frost and North look in detail at the *Militant* Labour Liverpool City Council of the 1980s but also set it in the context of the 1970-80s world capitalist crises. The authors rightly point out that

Liverpool's 'urban problems derive from broader structural factors' such as the shift in world trade, and were all part of the 'long term decline of its industrial and commercial bases.'

For the Trotskyist Militant Tendency 'capitalism had failed the population of Liverpool' but what had failed was Keynesian capitalism in Britain which was unable to prevent mass unemployment and 'stagflation' (stagnation and inflation of over 25 percent). Labour Cabinet Minister Tony Crosland said in 1974 that 'the party is over' while Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan said in 1976: 'we used to think that you could spend your way out of a recession and increase employment by cutting taxes and boosting government spending. I tell you in all candour that that option no longer exists.'

The stage was set for the return of economic liberalism and free market capitalism with the election of a Conservative government in 1979.

The authors see the 1983 Liverpool Labour/Militant council as a 'socialist labour council with a radical socialist programme' which is absurd as the Council were operating municipal capitalism. The Liverpool Trots believed large amounts of money would be needed from government to fix the city's problems, they fixated on the Tories having 'stolen Liverpool's money' and 'the council resolved on confrontation to provide the resources it argued the city needed.' A lot of the book deals with local government finance and there is even a need for a definition of 'capitalisation' as 'moving spending from day to day spending – revenue – which needs to be raised from the rates to long term spending on infrastructure that did not count against day to day spending – capital.' There is the grim irony of reading about the Trots in Liverpool securing £30 million from a consortium led by nationalised

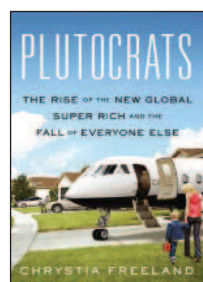
French bank Banc Paribas, negotiating a £30 million facility from London stockbrokers and getting a £60 million loan from Swiss banks described by the *Guardian* as 'the gnomes of Zurich have rallied to the Trotskyists on Merseyside.'

The Militant Trots in Liverpool wanted to turn the Labour Party into an explicitly Leninist party. It used it as a recruitment vehicle, while their 'democratic centralist tendencies left little room for dissent or reflection, even when mistakes were made' and they described in exaggerated fashion how Liverpool 1984 was 'Petrograd-on-Mersey' or the Paris Commune. Eventually the trade unions realised they were being used by the Trots as a stage army, foot soldiers and cannon fodder, and were especially shocked by 'the grotesque chaos of a Labour council hiring taxis to scuttle around the city handing out redundancy notices to its own workers' (Kinnock).

Former Liverpool City Councillor Paul Lafferty's inquest on Militant in Liverpool said 'all the lighting on pavements point out onto the road and we thought why don't we turn them around and point them on the people? And I think that says everything about us really.' It does. **SPC**

The Top of the One Percent

***Plutocrats: the Rise of the New Global Super-Rich* by Chrystia Freeland. Penguin £9.99.**



Chrystia Freeland has no objection to the current social system and those who benefit from it: 'we need capitalists, because we need capitalism', she writes. And she

is now a Liberal MP in Canada. But her book does have some interesting things to say about the very wealthiest people in society and the increase in inequality.

It is quite common nowadays to refer to the 1 percent who form the top of the class pyramid. But even within this 1 percent there is a distinction between a plutocratic super-elite (which is overwhelmingly male) and those who are 'merely wealthy'. In 2005, for instance, Bill Gates and Warren Buffett had a combined wealth of \$90bn, not far short of that of the 120 million people who formed the bottom 40 percent

of the US population. In 2008, the top 2 percent of the 1 percent in Britain, which must be only about ten thousand people, received almost one-seventh of the income of the 1 percent. The super-elite set up 'philanthropic' foundations, such as the Gates Foundation, as status symbols.

Also, the higher echelons of the elite mostly operate at a truly global level, with English as their lingua franca. Its members may have been born in one country and educated in another (quite likely at a university such as Harvard or Oxford). They may own a multi-national company with its headquarters in a third country and have homes on two or three continents. So possibly the biggest capitalists are becoming less tied to particular countries and identify less with a national capitalist class. But many of them make sure to attend top British social events, such as Ascot and Wimbledon.

More controversially, Freeland claims that many plutocrats are the 'working rich'. They are chief executive officers or top bankers or lawyers, rather than just people who own masses of shares. Though few come from truly impoverished backgrounds, their enormous wealth is not inherited, so they are supposedly 'self-made men'. They mostly work in newish industries such as computing or other kinds of technology, or else in finance. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that these 'alpha geeks' often had some idea for a website or a piece of software, but they were just lucky in getting into a position where they could exploit others, and that is what really made them so fantastically wealthy.

So Freeland's book does have some interesting things to say on ways in which capitalism is changing, and on how it is not.

PB

Sound and some fury

***Sounds From the Park – An Oral History of Speakers' Corner.* Bishopgate Institute exhibition (till 30 April), London, with associated free booklet, website and local radio broadcast.**

This attempt to explore and record the open-air speaking and debating forum that arose at Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, from the late nineteenth century onwards will be reviewed in the next edition of the *Socialist Standard*.

Utopia by John Pilger



John Pilger's recent film *Utopia* about the Aboriginal 'Nation' (the 'First Australians') is an emotional and unrelenting look at 'apartheid' in Australia today with graphic footage of police tasering and brutalising young black Australian men in custody. The shocking racism in modern Australia is in stark contrast to the sympathetic and positive portrayal of the Aborigines in such films as Nicolas Roeg's *Walkabout* and Wim Wenders *Until the End of the World*.

Pilger identifies the huge inequality between the rich whites and poor Aborigines by contrasting the affluent suburb of Barton in Canberra with the township of Utopia 200 km from Alice Springs in the Northern Territory which is home to the 'First Australians'. Barton was named after Australia's first Prime Minister Edmund Barton who declared in 1901 'The doctrine of the equality of man was never intended to [apply to]

those not British and white-skinned.' The Aboriginal peoples live with sub-standard sanitation, shelter, public transport, water, light, and serious eye disease in children, and one third of Aboriginal people die before the age of 45. Pilger states that 'Black Australians are the most imprisoned people on earth'. He recounts how in Western Australia in 2008 an Aborigine man 'cooked to death' in a police van, how a new all-Aboriginal prison is being built and how the treatment of the Aborigines is a 'punishing of the poor, a punishing of indigenous difference.'

Pilger identifies capitalism as the major factor in the racist brutalisation of the First Australians. The Aboriginal Land Rights movement was subjected to a vicious TV campaign funded by the mining companies and would lead eventually to Prime Minister Bob Hawke dropping Land Rights legislation. Mining capitalist Lang Hancock stated 'Nothing should be sacred from mining whether it's your ground, my ground, the black fellow's ground or anybody else's. So the question of Aboriginal Land Rights and things of this nature shouldn't exist'. Pilger shows a 1984 television interview where Hancock advocates the sterilisation of Aborigine people.

Pilger discusses the 2007 Northern Territory National Emergency Response known as 'The Intervention' where on the pretext that there were widespread paedophile gangs operating in Aboriginal communities, the Australian Federal Government

sent troops in, suspended the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act and introduced 'special measures', and there was 'compulsory acquisition of townships currently held under the title provisions of the Native Title Act.' The 'Intervention' was a Trojan Horse in order that the Federal Government could regain control over disputed land and then grant mining concessions to the capitalist class. In the same period the mining capitalists ensured the Federal Government's Mineral Resource Rent Tax would not take too much of their profits, in fact the mining companies saved 60 billion Australian dollars. The United Nations said that 'the Intervention' was racially discriminating and infringed the human rights of aboriginal peoples.

Pilger believes there is a beacon of hope by concluding with the 'hidden history of aboriginal resistance' with accounts of the 1966 Gurindji strike at Wave Hill and the 1973 cotton chippers strike at Wee Waa. *Utopia* is a grim catalogue of crimes against a people but when it comes to the insatiable lust for profit in the mining of bauxite, iron ore, and uranium nothing can stand in the way of capitalism.

The Aboriginal people believe the earth and people are one but capitalism cannot understand such a concept. Only socialism can realise the Aboriginal 'Dreamtime' when 'the earth is made a common treasury' for all peoples.

SPC



Channel Hopping The Shopping Channels

IF YOU find an advert particularly irksome, at least it's over in a few seconds before you can return to your cosy ITV drama. There's no such relief if you venture on to one of the many shopping channels cluttering up your digibox, where life is one long advert after another. Here, each stretched-out infomercial is presented by a chirpy wannabe Channel 5 continuity announcer. The presenters will babble on for half an hour about the virtues of a mystic peacock quartz sterling silver ring with 3D conical facets, or how a baked brow tones set with a double-ended brow brush will transform your eyebrows. They will go into more detail than you ever wanted about the cleverly-designed drainage holes at the bottom of a plastic plant pot, or how 82c is the optimum temperature for cleaning a carpet. It takes either some skill or some medication to keep up the bland bonhomie, even if the enthusiastic descriptions end

up meaningless. Most of the products are 'amazing'; others are 'collectors' quality' or 'professional grade', apparently. On Bid TV, every sentence the presenters say ends with an exclamation mark, while over on QVC they talk in block capitals. Weirdly, the infomercials are broken up with 'commercial breaks' which only have adverts for the channel itself.

At least the shopping channels are upfront about being nothing more than intermediaries between your bank account and another dose of retail therapy. Within a few minutes of tuning in you'll be wondering how you ever coped without a faux fur colour changing cushion with a seven LED colour cycle. Channels like Gems TV and Rocks & Co try to muster up the 'ooh, I've got a bargain' feeling by starting out with an over-inflated price for their latest bit of bling.

Then, helped with a countdown and heartbeat sound effect, the price drops – often by thousands of pounds – to whatever they were going to charge everyone anyway. Plus P&P. Plus the cost of the phone call to order it. What you can get from the shopping channels, without spending anything, is an example of how vacuous the market system can be. Hurry while stocks last!

Mike Foster



Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site:
<http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

London Clapham

Sunday **2 March** 6.00pm

Film: *The Miners' Campaign Tapes*.

Sunday **16 March** 6.00pm

Film: *Gasland*.

Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

Glasgow

Wednesday **19 March** 8.30pm

WHAT IS JUSTICE?

Speaker: Vic Vanni.

Community Central Halls,
304 Maryhill Road G20 6HT.

East Anglia

Saturday **22 March** 2.00 - 5.00pm

ROSA LUXEMBURG

Speaker: Pat Deutz.

Nelson Hotel (opposite the train station)
Prince of Wales Road, Norwich NR1 1DX
(The meeting space can be accessed by going through the Costa Coffee Café and down the stairs. Left hand side of the bar as you face it).

London Clapham

Wednesday **26 March** 7.00pm

Debate: Elizabeth Jones (UKIP) and Bill Martin (Socialist Party).
Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

London Clapham

Sunday **30 March** 3.00pm

WHAT'S WRONG WITH UTOPIA?

Speaker: Glenn Morris

Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.



Latest issue of Socialist Party of Canada journal available from 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN for £2 (including postage). Cheques payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain".

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Manchester

Saturday **15 March** 2.00pm

DISCUSSION ON INEQUALITY

The Unicorn, 26 Church Street,
Manchester M4 1PW.

London Chiswick

Tuesday **18 March** 8.00pm

LESSONS OF THE PARIS COMMUNE

Speaker: Steve Clayton.

Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall,
Heathfield Terrace, W4 4JN (nearest tube: Chiswick Park).

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as

a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of

the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

50 Years Ago

Big stamp wrangle

THE BIGGEST battle for a long time is now being fought in the retail trade in this country—and all, on the surface, over a little piece of green, or pink, or gold, sticky paper called a Trading Stamp. Yes, on the surface. The real cause of the battle is to be found much deeper than any newspaper cares to dig.

Trading Stamps have been going in this country for a long time with Green Shield, a British company, having the big hold. But the stamps were mainly confined to small shops; they had no really big retail organisation to issue them. What



started the present fuss was the decision of millionaire Garfield Weston (ABC, Fine Fare Supermarkets) to issue the American Sperry and Hutchinson pink stamps in his supermarkets.

This started a flood of stamps, among them another American concern—King Korn—and another British—Super Yellow, owned by the same John Bloom who has made a lot of money out of direct selling washing machines. One gimmick followed another—Mr. Weston, for example, had glamorous pink-coated hostesses outside his supermarkets dishing out the S.H. gift catalogue. (...)

As long as the working class are deluded by the gimmicks of capitalism in all their many shapes and sorts—there will be no end to them. Perhaps some enterprising firm will try white balloons next. For saving so many white balloons you can get so many black stamps which you can exchange for so many pink discs which you can swap for ... and so on, and so on, until they get wise to it, and it dawns on them that a better, saner way of making and distributing humanity's wealth is so that it is strictly for use instead of for sale and letting all human beings have free access to it. **J. McG.**

(*Socialist Standard*, March 1964)

SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX FOR 2013

For a copy send 2 second-class stamps to: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN.

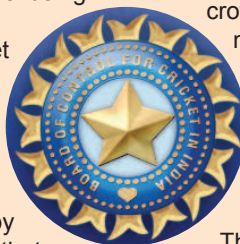
ACTION REPLAY

Power Play

WE'VE WRITTEN before about the power struggles in rugby union, among clubs and national and international associations, especially over who gets the money from TV coverage (*Action Replay*, November last year). Now we turn our attention to cricket, where a comparable clash of interests is being played out.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is the international governing body. It has 106 members, including countries such as Bulgaria, which has only eight clubs. So naturally it is dominated by the ten full members, those that play Tests, from Australia to Zimbabwe. But within these there is an inner elite, Australia, England and India. And now these three have proposed a new system that concentrates the money and power even more in their hands. South Africa is currently the top-ranked Test team, but the country is not such a big player financially.

Under the new system, which was agreed by the ICC on 8 February, there



will be an executive committee to run the Council, and this will be dominated by the elite three. There will be two Test divisions, incorporating some of the current associate members such as Ireland, and the elite cannot be relegated from the first division, wherever they finish. The income from broadcasting rights is to be redistributed, with the top three becoming relatively wealthier than the other ICC members, and with India doing particularly well in financial terms.

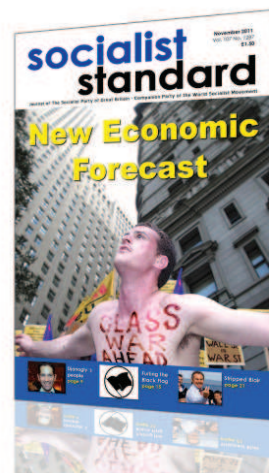
In fact India has been generally seen as the villain of the piece. Cricket is the national sport there, with enormous crowds and TV audiences and the massively popular and lucrative Indian Premier League. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) have been described as acting like 'lawless thugs' (Scyld Berry, *Telegraph online*, 1 February).

The whole idea may well be an attempt to stop the BCCI from picking up their bat, stumps and ball and walking away from world tournaments and tours to other countries.

Berry went on to say that, if the BCCI were to leave and refuse to defend their World Cup title, 'India's government and people will not allow them to get away with it'. Which is a rather optimistic approach to how the power-brokers and money-men operate.

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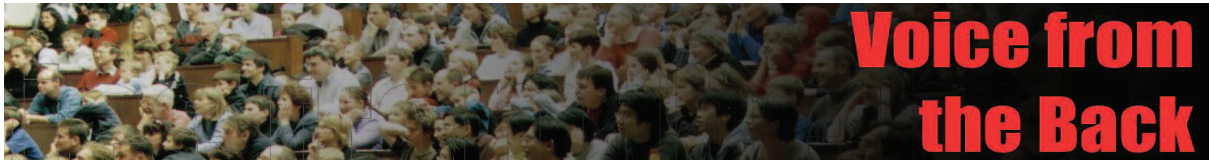
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Voice from the Back

Too Poor To Live

You would think that the purpose of medical research is to save lives. Think again, this is capitalism. In an interview with *Bloomberg Businessweek*, Bayer CEO Marijn Dekkers said that his company's new cancer drug, Nexavar, isn't for Indians, but 'for western patients who can afford it'. 'The drug, which is particularly effective on late-stage kidney and liver cancer, costs approximately \$69,000 per year in India, so in March 2012 an Indian court granted a license to an Indian company to produce the drug at a 97 percent discount. Bayer sued Natco Pharma Ltd, but in March of last year, the High Court in Mumbai denied its appeal. Bayer CEO called the compulsory license issued by the Indian court 'essentially theft,' then said 'we did not develop this medicine for Indians we developed it for western patients who can afford it' (*Raw Story*, 26 January). The purpose of medical research, like everything else inside capitalism, is to make a profit.



Dying To Work

The owning class hate to see workers not working. After all they rely on them to produce the surplus value the owners

live on. In addition the owning class have got to pay out sickness benefits. Last year they reckon it cost them about £13 billion. The present government have appointed the company ATOS to overhaul the benefits system. Its findings have not been without its critics though. 'One 39-year old woman from Livingston, near Edinburgh, was judged fit to work just weeks before she died. A heart and lung transplant patient from Essex died nine days after being declared well enough for employment' (*Sunday Times*, 9 February). C'mon workers so you are a bit knackered ... oops dead! Sorry about that.

Business As Usual

Every year the president of the USA gives a State of the Union speech. It is usually the same old guff about how marvellous everything is inside capitalism, but this year there was a slight difference. 'Those at the top have never done better. But average wages have barely budged. Inequality has deepened. Upward mobility has stalled. The cold, hard fact is that even in the midst of recovery, too many Americans are working more than ever just to get by – let alone get ahead. And too many still aren't working at all' (*Independent*, 29 January). It is indicative of how awful capitalism has become that even the president of the USA has to acknowledge it. Needless to say however he will carry on running capitalism the only way it can be run – in the interests of the owning class based on the exploitation of the working class.

American Nightmare

The USA is often depicted as the

embodiment of the virtues of modern capitalism but we are indebted to the American economist Paul Krugman for this expose of its less than perfect characteristics: 'What do we know about long-term unemployment in America? First, it's still at near-record levels. Historically, the long-term unemployed – those out of work for 27 weeks or more – have usually been between 10 and 20 percent of total unemployment. Today the number is 35.8 percent. Yet extended



Conference calling with the speechwriters

unemployment benefits, which went into effect in 2008, have now been allowed to lapse. As a result, few of the long-term unemployed are receiving any kind of support' (*New York Times*, 9 February). Hardly the American dream is it?

Knightsbridge Bargain

While many workers scrimp and save in an effort to get together a deposit for a mortgage it is worthwhile looking at how the owning class live. 'An allotted space in an underground car park has gone on sale for £400,000. The space, near the Royal Albert Hall, Knightsbridge, is large enough for a Rolls-Royce Phantom and comes with metal lockable doors' (*Times*, 13 February). You homeless workers will be glad to know that the agent Hobart Slater said 'We've already had plenty of interest in the space.'

FREE LUNCH

